

Honda On Tillman Investigation: Serious Questions Remain

Written by Mike Honda
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“On April 22, 2004, Army Specialist Patrick Tillman was killed in Afghanistan. Early reports claimed that Tillman was killed by enemy fire. The Army posthumously promoted Tillman to Corporal and awarded him the Silver Star for his actions. Weeks later, Tillman’s family was notified that his death was a possible fratricide, a conclusion confirmed in a 2005 report by Brigadier General Gary Jones. Today, the Inspector General of the Department of Defense released a report of its investigations. The Inspector General confirmed what Tillman’s fellow soldiers and higher ranking officials knew almost immediately: Corporal Tillman was killed by friendly fire.

“I have yet to review the report in its entirety and await word from the Tillman family about their impressions and reactions. Today, what has been confirmed is that incorrect information was passed through the ranks; that the Tillman family was not notified in a timely manner, as required by Army standards, of suspicions and even multiple determinations that Corporal Patrick Tillman was killed by friendly fire; and that known inaccuracies in unsigned statements were the basis of Corporal Tillman’s posthumous recognition. The awarding of his Silver Star has been reviewed and it has been confirmed that Corporal Tillman’s brave service merits this award. We do know that things have gone terribly wrong. We do know that mistakes were made up the ranks that have let down a patriotic family and our country.

“Nonetheless, from today’s presentation and from what I have seen of the report, it is evident that the review performed by the Department of Defense is the most thorough investigation to date. Today’s briefing, however, has presented more questions than answers. We have not yet been given clear answers about what corrective action will be taken to ensure accountability in the mishandling of this case and hope General Wallace will promptly report back his determinations for further action. We do not know whether these errors are systemic or are isolated in this particular chain of command, nor have we been informed of any clear steps to ensure that such mishandling will be prevented in the future. Given these uncertainties, I have not yet ruled out Congressional action on this matter.”